DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 412 649 EA 028 727

AUTHOR	McChesney, Jim
TITLE	Renewing Schools.
INSTITUTION	ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, Eugene, OR.; National Association of Elementary School Principals, Alexandria, VA.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	1997-00-00
NOTE	5p.
CONTRACT	RR93002006
AVAILABLE FROM	Educational Products, National Association of Elementary School Principals, 1615 Duke Street, Alexandria, VA 22314-3483 (single copies, $2.50; bulk orders, 10 or more, $2 each; Virginia residents add 4.5% sales tax).
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022) -- ERIC Publications (071)
JOURNAL CIT	Research Roundup; v14 n1 Fall 1997
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Case Studies; Educational Administration; *Educational Change; *Elementary Secondary Education; Low Income Groups; Minority Groups; *Partnerships in Education; *Political Influences; Program Evaluation; *Readiness; *School Restructuring; Urban Schools
IDENTIFIERS	*Reform Efforts

ABSTRACT

This publication reviews works on educational reform that represent attempts to do more than merely respond in knee-jerk fashion to political pressure for reform. Bruce Joyce and Emily Calhoun, in "Learning Experiences in School Renewal: An Exploration of Five Successful Programs" (Eugene, Oregon: ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, 1996) look at case studies of diverse districts across the nation that have made dramatic improvements in student learning through synergistic combinations of well-implemented programs. In "An Ethnographic Snapshot of a Successful Elementary School in Educating Low Income Minority Children" (Missouri City, Texas: Executive Steering Team Achievement Gap Task Force Group, Fort Bend Independent School, 1996), James M. Wolf reports on a study of an elementary school's success with low-income minority students. "The Vermont Restructuring Collaborative" (Brandon, Vermont: Holistic Education Press, 1994) examines the weaknesses of traditional public education and the testimony of educators who have seen reforms that work. Lew Allen and Barbara Lundsford, in "How To Form Networks for School Renewal" (Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1995), offer practical suggestions on how educators can form partnerships with other schools that lead to more effective teaching. Robert E. Slavin, in "Sand, Bricks, and Seeds: School Change Strategies and Readiness for Reform" (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University, 1997), analyzes several reform theories and their relation to schools' readiness for reform. (SLD)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED 412 649

Research roundup

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

VOLUME 14, NUMBER 1
FALL 1997

Renewing Schools

Jim McChesney

"Don't be afraid to take a big step when one is indicated. You can't cross a chasm in two small steps."
—David Lloyd George

Reform—and its associates, renewal and change—are as American as the Declaration of Independence, western migration, and ever more powerful computers. Born of the belief that things always can be better, reform has been a dominant theme in American culture.

American education is no exception to this tradition. From the idea of free public schools to the educational philosophy of John Dewey, tremors of reform have touched our educational system time and time again. In the Cold War period of the 1950s and early '60s, the brain race was as much a concern as the arms race. And since 1983, when *A Nation at Risk* was published, considerable attention has been focused on the purported failures of our nation's educational system and on proposed remedies for those shortcomings.

Proposals for educational reform have varied widely, from channeling more dollars into current systems to revamping the systems themselves. Despite reluctance to change, and the tendency of many proposals to become self-serving vehicles for individuals or institutions, some reform efforts have been shown to be both substantive and effective.

The works reviewed here represent some outstanding examples of attempts to do more than simply respond in knee-jerk fashion to political pressure.

Bruce Joyce and *Emily Calhoun* look at five case studies of diverse districts across the nation that have made dramatic improvements in student learning through synergistic combinations of well-implemented programs.

James M. Wolf reports on the findings of an ethnographic study of an elementary school's success in educating low-income minority children.

The Vermont Restructuring Collaborative examines the weaknesses of traditional public education and the testimony of several educators who have experienced programs and initiatives that work.

Lew Allen and *Barbara Lunsford* offer practical suggestions on how educators can form partnerships with other schools that can lead to more effective teaching.

Robert E. Slavin analyzes several reform theories and their relation to schools' readiness for reform.

Joyce, Bruce; and Calhoun, Emily, Eds. **Learning Experiences in School Renewal: An Exploration of Five Successful Programs.** Eugene, Ore.: ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, 1996. 208 pages. ED 401 600. *Available from:* ERIC/CEM, 5207 University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403-5207. (800) 438-8841. $14.50 plus $4.00 shipping and handling.

Real change can take place in schools, change that enables students to improve their ability to learn. This is the contention of

Jim McChesney is a research analyst and writer for the ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management at the University of Oregon.

EA 028 727

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Joyce and Calhoun, who document a variety of successful approaches to renewal in five school districts across the country.

The districts vary in geographic location, size, economic background, and demographics. They are pseudonymously named the River City Program, serving about 30,000 students with average achievement; the University Town Program, with about 5,000 students and an achievement level in the nation's top 5 percent; Readersville, a collection of 11 Department of Defense schools that worked to improve reading and writing programs in school and at home; the Inner City Program, an urban district of about 100 schools serving 350,000 residents in a generally blighted environment; and the Action Network, focusing on shared governance and involving more than 60 schools of differing demographics in a Southeastern state.

Targeted areas differed from program to program, though commonalities existed. In each of the programs, all teachers and administrators were involved. In three programs, several models of teaching were studied, peer coaching teams were organized, and data were systematically used to make program adjustments.

Action research was used in several programs to help establish some degree of democratic governance and to help staff study the health of their school's educational system. Action research can work quite effectively, the studies found, especially with adequate technical assistance.

Ultimately, each program brought about a needed change through concerted, multilayered efforts. In one middle school, faculty participating in an intensive school-renewal program committed themselves to collegial organization, intensive study of teaching and curriculum, and the formative study of implementation and student learning. The student promotion rate at the school rose from 30 percent to 90 percent in two years, an effect that has been sustained for six more years. Not all the reform programs became self-perpetuating, however; the challenge of helping them do so still awaits serious research.

Wolf, James M. **An Ethnographic Snapshot of a Successful Elementary School in Educating Low Income Minority Children.** Missouri City, Tex.: Executive Steering Team Achievement Gap Task Group, Fort Bend Independent School, 1996. *Available from:* Synergistic Schools, 4646 Highway 6, Suite 216, Sugarland, TX 77478-5214. (281) 437-0230. $10.00 plus $4.00 shipping and handling.

The student population at Glover Elementary School in Missouri City, Texas, is 90 percent African American, 8 percent Hispanic, 1.5 percent white, and less than 1 percent Asian. Thirty percent of the students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch programs. But Glover students achieve way beyond the stereotypical expectations of their demographics.

For example, on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), third-grade scores were in the 90th percentile, while fourth- and fifth-grade scores were in the 80th and 70th percentiles, respectively. Economically disadvantaged students were the second-highest scoring single subgroup. More than a third of the students in grades 2 through 5 made the honor roll. The attendance rate at Glover is 96.6 percent, higher than the district or state average.

Something is working at Glover, and Wolf and his researchers set out to discover what it is. Following a series of open-ended and structured interviews with staff members and students, as well as classroom observation, Wolf identified a number of characteristics under these headings: the principal; a shared belief system; common goals; working in teams; cultural cohesion; teacher commitment; teacher efficacy; and TAAS preparation activities.

Among more than 30 characteristics of the principal that are believed to contribute to the school's success are the following:

- Being a strong, positive, and reinforcing instructional leader, initiator, and manager;
- Being highly goal-oriented, with a keen sense of goal clarity;
- Creating and communicating a compelling vision of what the school should look like; and
- Strongly believing that all children can and will learn.

Factors under other categories that contributed to school success include:

- A schoolwide belief that all children can and will learn;
- Goals and objectives that are jointly formulated;
- Commitment to, and emphasis on, team-building;
- Teachers' belief that student failure is teaching failure; and
- Extensive preparation for TAAS tests, including morale-building "pep rallies."

Vermont Restructuring Collaborative. **Field Guide to Educational Renewal.** Brandon, Vt.: Holistic Education Press, 1994. 348 pages. ED 372 496. *Available from:* Holistic Education Press, P.O. Box 328, Brandon, VT 05733. (802) 247-8312. $15.00 plus $3.95 shipping and handling.

The authors of this collection of essays on educational renewal believe, in the words of John Dewey, "the purpose of education is a democratic society." This means that education is understood to be for all children, and that its goal is

to maximize each child's particular abilities, as well as to help students adapt to change and develop problem-solving and communication skills.

The book is based on six precepts: School change must be driven by a vision for a better and more responsive educational system; leadership is essential for establishing this vision; teaching and learning in renewed schools must fundamentally differ from traditional approaches; educators must be learners as well as teachers; the idea of education must be expanded and integrated with other elements of society; and each of these pieces must be put together into one seamless whole.

Of particular interest are sections on encouraging teachers to be continuous learners, and the breaking down of barriers among schools, social service agencies, and businesses.

"We have the kind of schools that our society has chosen to build and support, and they reflect both the lack of a clear social focus and a cacophony of conflicting demands," notes William J. Mathis, one of the authors. This collection represents substantial and successful efforts to move beyond confusion toward a visionary, systematic approach to educating our children.

Allen, Lew; and Lunsford, Barbara. **How to Form Networks for School Renewal.** Alexandria, Va: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1995. 57 pages. ED 381 868. *Available from:* ASCD, 1250 North Pitt St., Alexandria, VA 22314-1453. (703) 549-3891. $6.95.

This handbook, designed to improve educational effectiveness through interschool networks, offers insights gleaned from the authors' own experience. Allen is director of outreach in the Program for School Improvement and Lunsford directs the League of Professional Schools, both based at the University of Georgia College of Education.

Allen and Lunsford offer practical suggestions for establishing networks that can enable educators to do their jobs better. Although outside assistance in the form of university classes, workshops, or special speakers is often available through the network, those with the most comprehensive understanding of what teachers and principals face each day are other teachers and principals.

Acknowledging that "school-based" educators too often become "school-bound," the authors recommend shifting from traditional inservice days, when outside experts are brought in, to an organized and regularly scheduled format in which educators meet with each other and share their expertise.

As an example, the League of Professional Schools:

- Provides regularly scheduled meetings where school teams share their work;
- Encourages cross-school collaboration by having teachers and principals visit other member schools;
- Enables school-based personnel to share their expertise by publishing network newsletters and monographs; and
- Involves educators in the network through the League Congress, ongoing consortiums, and ad hoc task forces.

"When school-based educators are given ongoing opportunities to network across schools, their professional knowledge, motivation, self-esteem, and, ultimately, their effectiveness in renewing their efforts with students increases dramatically," say Allen and Lunsford.

Such networks need to be "practitioner-driven," and not simply another organization of which the school is a member. Networks must be fully participatory and responsive to changing needs. Full participation by every principal is necessary, as is at least 80 percent support from faculty.

Slavin, Robert E. **Sand, Bricks, and Seeds: School Change Strategies and Readiness for Reform.** Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University, April 1997. 24 pages. *Available from:* Johns Hopkins University, Attn.: Robert E. Slavin, 3505 North Charles St., Baltimore, MD 21218. (410) 516-8809. Free.

All the king's horses and all the king's men can't bring about school reform if the school is not ready for reform. Slavin notes that, despite persistent calls for reform over the past 15 years and the ability of numerous programs to bring about reform, some schools still aren't ready to change.

After discussing various types of reform—organizational development models, comprehensive reform models, and single-subject models—Slavin poses the question: Which approach is most likely to bring about change in teachers' practices and improvement in stu-

---

About ERIC

The Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) is a national information system operated by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI). The ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, one of 16 such units in the system, was established at the University of Oregon in 1966.

This publication was prepared by the Clearinghouse with funding from OERI, U.S. Department of Education, under contract no. OERI-RR-93002006. No federal funds were used in the printing.

ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, University of Oregon, 1787 Agate St., Eugene, Oregon 97403. Phone 1-800-438-8841.

dent achievement?

The answer, he says, depends on the characteristics of the individual schools—characteristics that place the schools in one of three categories: seeds, bricks, or sand.

Seed schools have an extraordinary capacity to transform vision into reality, are filled with faculty who are cohesive and excited about teaching, and are led by a visionary who is willing to involve the entire staff in decisions. They are like seeds that, when placed in the fertile ground of vision, can grow their own reforms.

An awareness and willingness to participate in reform is also evident in *brick* schools, but they are unlikely to create their own methods of reform. These schools need to bring in outside programs—haul in the bricks—to build successful reforms.

Sand schools are those in which even the most heroic efforts at reform will fail, due to complacency, financial or personnel turmoil, or lack of leadership. Trying to bring about change in these schools is like building a house on sand.

Cautioning against mismatches between strategies and readiness, Slavin warns that successful reform takes time, demands dedicated funding, and requires administrators to be selective, investing effort where it will do the most good.

Research Roundup is published three times during the school year by the National Association of Elementary School Principals. Single copies: $2.50; bulk orders (10 or more): $2.00 ea. Virginia residents add 4.5% sales tax. Specify date and title of issue when ordering. Checks payable to NAESP must accompany order. Send to Educational Products, NAESP, 1615 Duke Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22314-3483.

Teaching Tools for the 21st Century

by Carolyn Coil

A primer for the future, this book contains flexible strategies and practical information to help teachers NOW. It includes techniques for:

- incorporating learning styles and modalities;
- dealing with multiple intelligences;
- understanding and managing cultural diversity;
- handling conflict;
- meeting the special needs of gifted student;
- assessment and technology—and more!

Item #TTC-RR1097
($18.95 members/$26.95 nonmembers)

Please add $4.50 for shipping and handling.
To order, call NAESP Educational Products at
1-800-38-NAESP (or 703-684-3345).
Or send check or purchase order to:

NAESP Educational Products
1615 Duke Street
Alexandria, VA 22314-3483

BEST COPY AVAILABLE